Case 3704

Lepisma Linnaeus, 1758 (Insecta, Zygentoma, LEPISMATIDAE): proposed reversal of Direction 71 (1957) regarding the gender of the name

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Abstract. The purpose of this application, under Articles 78.1, 78.2.3 and 80.2 of the

Code, is to resolve an ongoing issue involving the gender of the name of the silverfish genus *Lepisma* Linnaeus, 1758 and other generic names derived from *Lepisma*. Under Direction 71 issued by the Commission in 1957, *Lepisma* is deemed to be of feminine gender despite being etymologically neuter. Unfortunately, Direction 71 did not explicitly advise on the treatment of genus-group names derived from *Lepisma*, all of which are neuter under Article 30.1.2 of the Code but nonetheless have generally been treated as feminine. Under Article 29.5 of the Code, prevailing use of the family name LEPIS-MATIDAE so spelled is not affected by the generic-level gender problem, but the scope of the gender-related confusion extends to almost half of the generic and specific names in the family LEPISMATIDAE Latreille, 1802, including such cosmopolitan peridomestic pests as *Lepisma saccharina* Linnaeus, 1758 and *Ctenolepisma longicaudata* Escherich, 1905. Three possible resolutions are proposed: that the Commission confirm that Direction 71 stands and the gender of *Lepisma* is feminine and also either (1) confirm that under Article 30.1.2 of the Code all generic names derived from *Lepisma* are of neuter gender,

thereby filling the gap in Direction 71, or (2) rule under the plenary power that all generic names derived from *Lepisma* are of feminine gender, thereby endorsing current usage; or (3) that the Commission use their plenary power to rescind Direction 71 such that *Lepisma* assumes its etymologically correct neuter gender, while also confirming that under Article 30.1.2 of the Code all genera with names derived from *Lepisma* are of neuter, not feminine, gender. Reasons are given for preferring the third option, despite the resulting need to emend at least 129 species-group names in the genera involved.

Keywords. Nomenclature; taxonomy; gender; Insecta; Zygentoma; Thysanura; LEPIS-MATIDAE; Afrolepisma; Anisolepisma; Asiolepisma; Burmalepisma; Cretalepisma; Ctenolepisma; Gopislepisma; Hemilepisma; Heterolepisma; Hyperlepisma; Lepisma; Leucolepisma; Mirolepisma; Nebkhalepisma; Neoasterolepisma; Ornatilepisma; Panlepisma; Protolepisma; Tricholepisma; Psammolepisma; Sabulepisma; Sceletolepisma; Swalepisma; Xenolepisma; saccharina; longicaudata; silverfish.

1. Linnaeus (1758, p. 608) described the first species of silverfish, giving it the name *Lepisma saccharina* Linnaeus, 1758. He treated the name *Lepisma* Linnaeus, 1758 as if it were feminine, although it is of Greek origin (meaning scaled) and neuter gender. Gmelin (1790, p. 2906) was the first to treat the genus as grammatically neuter when he referred to the species as *Lepisma saccharinum*, but most subsequent authors continued to treat *Lepisma* as feminine. It was placed on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology by the ruling given in Opinion 104 (p. 27) (Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections 73(5): 25–28, 19 September 1928; see also Opinions and Declarations 1B: 393–396, 30 September 1958), but with no gender specified. The Official List entry was emended by a ruling in Direction 63 (p. 25) to record the method by which the type species of the genus was determined) (Opinions and Declarations 1E: 21–60, 21 June 1957). The name *saccharina* was placed on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology as Name 1289 by a ruling in Direction 64 (Opinions and Declarations 1E: 61–74, 21 June 1957).

2. A further 22 genera and one subgenus have since been erected with names derived from *Lepisma*, the larger ones being *Ctenolepisma* Escherich, 1905 (p. 75), *Heterolepisma* Escherich, 1905 (p. 63) and *Neoasterolepisma* Mendes, 1988 (p. 13). Under Article

30.1.2 of the current edition of the Code, 'a genus-group name that is or ends in a Greek word transliterated into Latin without other changes takes the gender given for that word in standard Greek dictionaries'. Accordingly, all genus-group names ending in *-lepisma* should be treated as of neuter, not feminine, gender.

3. This gender issue has also played a role in disputes over the valid spelling of the family name, which was initially proposed by Latreille (1802, p. 70) as Lepismenae. Leach (1815, p. 76) later referred to the family as Lepismida, Billberg (1820, p. 124) called it Lepismaedes at the rank of 'Natio' (the single rank he placed between the 'Legio' Thysanura and genus *Lepisma* and therefore equivalent to family), and Wiegmann & Ruthe (1832, p. 475) used the name LEPISMIDAE. All of these names were formed by placing various endings on the stem 'Lepism-', which may imply an understanding of the name of the type genus as feminine on the part of these authors. Burmeister (1838, pp. 444, 453) was the first to suggest a family name, LEPISMATIDAE, with a stem 'Lepismat-' that matches the etymologically neuter gender of *Lepisma*. Grassi (1888, p. 582) reverted

to a spelling based on the former stem, i.e. LEPISMIDAE. Escherich (1905, p. 35), in the first monograph on the silverfish, used the neuter-compatible spelling LEPISMATIDAE. This spelling seems to have been used by all authors since Escherich and is therefore considered to be in prevailing use. Under Article 29.5 of the Code, LEPISMATIDAE will, therefore, remain unchanged irrespective of any decision concerning the gender of its type genus *Lepisma*.

4. Hemming (1955, pp. 299–300), in his capacity of Secretary of the Commission, prepared an application for consideration by the Commission (see also pp. 153–154 in Direction 71: Opinions and Declarations 1E: 151–160, 24 July 1957) in which he drew attention to the difficulties that had arisen in assigning a gender to *Lepisma*. He proposed the use of the plenary power to prescribe for this name a gender in harmony with accepted usage, i.e. as feminine (see Direction 71). Two written opinions (Clay, 1955, p. 300; Delany, 1955, p. 300) in support of this proposal were published along with Hemming (1955), and two additional opinions in support were received later and published in Direction 71.

5. Paclt submitted an argument against the proposal, also published in Direction 71 (pp. 157–158), noting his own extensive use of *Lepisma* in the neuter gender in a published monograph (i.e. Paclt, 1956) and in a review 'soon to be published'. He listed six authors, none of whom were significant contributors to Zygentoma systematics, to show that acceptance of the feminine form was by no means universal. He also raised the issue of the many genera with names derived from *Lepisma*, such as *Heterolepisma* and *Ctenolepisma*, noting (Direction 71, p. 158) that 'some Russian authors are familiar with the correct gender of Lepisma'.

6. The Commission ruled in favour of treating the name *Lepisma* as being of feminine gender by a vote of 23 to two. This decision was published in Direction 71 (pp. 158–160), but the question of the treatment of the gender of derivative names was apparently not considered. The term 'Direction' is not used in the present Code except in the Code's Glossary, where it is defined as a statement 'giving the result of a vote completing or correcting a ruling given in an Opinion'. In the present Case, Direction 71 completed the ruling about *Lepisma* in Opinion 104, which did not specify any gender for this name. The Glossary goes on to note that 'Directions have been replaced by Official Corrections'.

7. Paclt (1967, p. 16) finally published his review of the family and effectively ignored Direction 71, using the name *Lepisma* in the neuter gender. The names of all affected species, including those of genera with *Lepisma*-derived names, were emended in this work to the neuter gender. He introduced the name *Hemilepisma* (Paclt, 1967, p. 34). Kaplin (1993, p. 34) also adopted the neuter gender in his paper, which included a comprehensive (but not widely adopted) revision of the large genus *Ctenolepisma*. Meanwhile, the other contributors to silverfish systematics (Molero-Baltanás et al., 1994, p. 104; Smith, 2015 p. 27) continued to describe new species using the feminine gender for species belonging to the genus *Lepisma* and, incorrectly, also for species belonging to genera with names derived from *Lepisma* (e.g. Wygodzinsky, 1959, p. 35; Irish, 1987, p. 159; Mendes, 1988, p. 112; Molero-Baltanás et al., 1995 p. 354, Smith, 2013, p. 232).

8. Of the 298 species names currently included in the family LEPISMATIDAE, some 238 names are included in genera affected by the *Lepisma* gender question (the full list of names is submitted to the Commission Secretariat). The names of at least two species, *Lepisma saccharina* and *Ctenolepisma longicaudata* Escherich, 1905 (p. 83), are well

established in the non-specialist literature but have appeared in both neuter and feminine forms. One of the authors of this proposal (Smith) is preparing to submit a catalogue of the world Zygentoma fauna for publication as part of his Ph.D. project. It is therefore hoped that the Commission can resolve this issue before the submission of this document for publication. Although the ruling in Direction 71 was obtained through use of the plenary power, as is evident in the title of Direction 71, it is not absolutely clear whether the plenary power must be invoked to reverse such a ruling. If Direction 71 is considered an 'error' that is to be fixed by negating the Direction, then Article 80.4 of the Code says 'the Commission shall reconsider the matter and publish a further Opinion'. The manner of reconsideration is not specified there in detail, but by reference to the previous sentence in Article 80.4, it must involve a further vote. To be sure of resolving the current matter conclusively, we ask that any reversal of Direction 71 by the Commission be done by invoking the plenary power.

9. Three routes of resolution are possible.

- (a) Maintaining the gender of *Lepisma* as feminine as mandated by the previous ruling of the Commission, Direction 71, while requiring all generic names derived from *Lepisma* (which were not covered by that Direction) to be treated as neuter in accordance with Article 30.1.2, in spite of the more extensive but incorrect use of the feminine gender. This option only requires the use of the Commission's specific powers under Article 78.2.3 of the Code, to explain how to apply the rules that are currently in force. Its consequence would be that the commonly used name *Lepisma saccharina* would not change but that *Ctenolepisma longicaudata* would change to *Ct. longicaudatum*. In total, 126 species names would need to be corrected in this way.
- (b) Maintaining the gender of *Lepisma* as feminine as mandated by the previous ruling of the Commission, Opinion 71, as in option a) above, while invoking the plenary power (Article 78.1 of the Code) to require that all generic names derived from *Lepisma* also be treated as feminine, in conformance with the most extensive current usage. The commonly used names *L. saccharina* and *Ct. longicaudata* would not change in consequence, nor would the names of most of the recently described species; just nine species names would need to be emended. However, this decision would deviate the farthest from the intent of the Code and would result in the largest deviation from the spellings used

by Paclt (1967) in the most recent catalogue of the family.

(c) Our preferred option would be to return to the etymologically correct gender allocation of *Lepisma* by invoking the plenary power (Article 78.1 of the Code) to overturn Opinion 71 and rule that *Lepisma* is of neuter gender and by also invoking the specific powers under Article 78.2.3 of the Code to require that all generic names derived from *Lepisma* be treated as neuter in accordance with Article 30.1.2. This would be in accordance with Paclt (1967) but contrary to the usage of most other Zygentoma specialists, including us. The commonly used names *L. saccharina* and *Ct. longicaudata* would both need to change, along with 129 other species names (this number excludes 18 names currently considered to be species inquirenda). Although this would require the largest number of species names to be emended of any of the three options, it would result in usage aligned with both the original intent of the Code and the most recent catalogue for the family.

10. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

Set A (preferred option):

- (1) to use its plenary power to overturn Direction 71 and rule that *Lepisma* is of neuter gender;
- (2) to emend the entry for *Lepisma* Linnaeus, 1758 on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology to indicate that its gender is neuter, as ruled in (1) above;
- (3) to use its specific powers under of the Code to require that all generic names derived from *Lepisma* be treated as neuter in accordance with Article 30.1.2;
- (4) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the following names (gender: neuter as ruled in (1) above):
 - (a) Afrolepisma Mendes, 1981 (gender: neuter), type species Lepisma traegardhi Silvestri, 1913 by original designation;
 - (b) Anisolepisma Paclt, 1967 (gender: neuter), type species Heterolepisma hartmeyeri Silvestri, 1908 by original designation;
 - (c) Asiolepisma Kaplin, 1989 (gender: neuter), type species Asiolepisma aellae Kaplin, 1989 by original designation;
 - (d) Burmalepisma Mendes and Poinar, 2008 (gender: neuter), type species Burmalepisma cretacicum Mendes & Poinar, 2008 by original designation;
 - (e) Cretalepisma Mendes & Wunderlich, 2013 (gender: neuter), type species Cretalepisma kachinicum Mendes & Wunderlich, 2013 by original designation;
 - (f) *Ctenolepisma* Escherich, 1905 (gender: neuter), type species *Lepisma lineata* Fabricius, 1775 by subsequent designation by Paclt, 1967 (p. 38);
 - (g) Gopsilepisma Irish, 1989 (gender: neuter), type species Gopsilepisma veracunda Irish, 1989 by original designation;
 - (h) Hemilepisma Paclt, 1967 (gender: neuter), type species Braunsiella heymonsi Escherich, 1905 by original designation;
 - (i) *Heterolepisma* Escherich, 1905 (gender: neuter), type species *Lepisma pampeana* Silvestri, 1902 by subsequent designation by Paclt, 1967;
 - (j) Hyperlepisma Silvestri, 1932 (gender: neuter), type species Hyperlepisma patrizii Silvestri, 1932 by original designation;
 - (k) *Leucolepisma* Wall, 1954 (gender: neuter), type species *Leucolepisma arenaria* Wall, 1954 by original designation;

- Mirolepisma Silvestri, 1938 (gender: neuter), type species Mirolepisma deserticola Silvestri, 1938 by original designation;
- (m) Nebkhalepisma Irish, 1988 (gender: neuter), type species Hyperlepisma australis Wygodzinsky, 1960 by original designation;
- (n) Neoasterolepisma Mendes, 1988 (gender: neuter), type species Lepisma foreli Moniez, 1894 by original designation;
- (o) Ornatilepisma Irish, 1988 (gender: neuter), type species Ornatilepisma horni Irish, 1988 by original designation;
- (p) Panlepisma Silvestri, 1940 (gender: neuter), type species Panelpisma argentina Silvestri, 1940 by original designation;
- (q) *Protolepisma* Mendes & Poinar, 2013 (gender: neuter), type species *P. tainicum* Mendes & Poinar, 2013 by original designation;
- (r) *Psammolepisma* Irish, 1988 (gender: neuter), type species *Ctenolepisma schultzei* Silvestri, 1908 by original designation;

- (s) Sabulepsisma Irish, 1988 in Irish & Mendes, 1988 (gender: neuter), type species Sabulepisma multiformis Irish, 1988 in Irish & Mendes, 1988 by original designation;
- (t) Sceletolepisma Wygodzinsky, 1955 (gender: neuter), type species Ctenolepisma (Sceletolepisma) arenicola Wygodzinsky, 1955 by original designation;
- (u) *Swalepisma* Irish, 1988 in Irish & Mendes, 1988 (gender: neuter), type species *Swalepisma mirabilis* Irish, 1988 in Irish & Mendes, 1988 by original designation;
- (v) *Tricholepisma* Paclt, 1967 (gender: neuter), type species *Lepisma aurea* Dufour, 1831 by original designation;
- (w) Xenolepisma Mendes, 1981 (gender: neuter), type species Lepisma globosa Escherich, 1905 by original designation;
- (5) to emend the entry for *saccharina* Linnaeus, 1758 on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology to read '*saccharinum* Linnaeus, 1758', the latter being deemed the correct original spelling in accordance with the ruling in (1) above;
- (6) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *longicaudatum* Escherich, 1905, as published in the binomen *Ctenolepisma longicaudata*.

Set B

- (1) to rule under its specific powers that the gender of *Lepisma* shall remain feminine as mandated by Direction 71;
- (2) to use its specific powers under of the Code to require that all generic names derived from *Lepisma* be treated as neuter in accordance with Article 30.1.2;
- (3) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the following names in accordance with (1) and (2) above:
 - (a) *Afrolepisma* Mendes, 1981 (gender: neuter), type species *Lepisma traegardhi* Silvestri, 1913 by original designation;
 - (b) Anisolepisma Paclt, 1967 (gender: neuter), type species Heterolepisma hartmeyeri Silvestri, 1908 by original designation;
 - (c) Asiolepisma Kaplin, 1989 (gender: neuter), type species Asiolepisma aellae Kaplin, 1989 by original designation;
 - (d) Burmalepisma Mendes and Poinar, 2008 (gender: neuter), type species

Burmalepisma cretacicum Mendes & Poinar, 2008 by original designation;

- (e) *Cretalepisma* Mendes & Wunderlich, 2013 (gender: neuter), type species *Cretalepisma kachinicum* Mendes & Wunderlich, 2013 by original designation;
- (f) Ctenolepisma Escherich, 1905 (gender: neuter), type species Lepisma lineata Fabricius, 1775 by subsequent designation by Paclt, 1967 p. 38 on the grounds of priority;
- (g) Gopsilepisma Irish, 1989 (gender: neuter), type species Gopsilepisma veracunda Irish, 1989 by original designation;
- (h) Hemilepisma Paclt, 1967 (gender: neuter), type species Braunsiella heymonsi Escherich, 1905 by original designation;
- (i) *Heterolepisma* Escherich, 1905 (gender: neuter), type species *Lepisma pampeana* Silvestri, 1902 by subsequent designation by Paclt, 1967;
- (j) Hyperlepisma Silvestri, 1932 (gender: neuter), type species Hyperlepisma patrizii Silvestri, 1932 by original designation;

or

- (k) Leucolepisma Wall, 1954 (gender: neuter), type species Leucolepisma arenaria Wall, 1954 by original designation;
- Mirolepisma Silvestri, 1938 (gender: neuter), type species Mirolepisma deserticola Silvestri, 1938 by original designation;
- (m) Nebkhalepisma Irish, 1988c (gender: neuter), type species Hyperlepisma australis Wygodzinsky, 1960 by original designation;
- (n) *Neoasterolepisma* Mendes, 1988 (gender: neuter), type species *Lepisma foreli* Moniez, 1894 by original designation;
- (o) Ornatilepisma Irish, 1988 (gender: neuter), type species Ornatilepisma horni Irish, 1988 by original designation;
- (p) *Panlepisma* Silvestri, 1940 (gender: neuter), type species *Panelpisma argentina* Silvestri, 1940 by original designation.
- (q) *Protolepisma* Mendes & Poinar, 2013 (gender: neuter), type species *P. tainicum* Mendes & Poinar, 2013 by original designation;
- (r) *Psammolepisma* Irish, 1988 (gender: neuter), type species *Ctenolepisma schultzei* Silvestri, 1908f by original designation;
- (s) Sabulepisma Irish, 1988 in Irish & Mendes, 1988 (gender: neuter), type species Sabulepisma multiformis Irish, 1988 in Irish & Mendes, 1988 by original designation;
- (t) Sceletolepisma Wygodzinsky, 1955 (gender: neuter), type species Ctenolepisma (Sceletolepisma) arenicola Wygodzinsky, 1955 by original designation;
- (u) Swalepisma Irish, 1988 in Irish & Mendes, 1988 (gender: neuter), type species Swalepisma mirabilis Irish, 1988 in Irish & Mendes, 1988 by original designation;
- (v) *Tricholepisma* Paclt, 1967 (gender: neuter), type species *Lepisma aurea* Dufour, 1831 by original designation;
- (w) Xenolepisma Mendes, 1981a (gender: neuter), type species Lepisma globosa Escherich, 1905 by original designation;
- (4) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *longicaudatum* Escherich, 1905, as published in the binomen *Ctenolepisma longicaudata*.

Set C

- (1) to rule under its specific powers that the gender of *Lepisma* shall remain feminine as mandated by Direction 71;
- (2) to rule under the plenary power that Article 30.1.2 of the Code notwithstanding, all genus-group names derived from *Lepisma* are to be treated as being of feminine gender;
- (3) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the following names in accordance with (1) and (2) above:
 - (a) Afrolepisma Mendes, 1981 (gender: feminine), type species Lepisma traegardhi Silvestri, 1913 by original designation;
 - (b) Anisolepisma Paclt, 1967 (gender: feminine), type species Heterolepisma hartmeyeri Silvestri, 1908 by original designation;
 - (c) Asiolepisma Kaplin, 1989 (gender: feminine), type species Asiolepisma aellae Kaplin, 1989 by original designation;

- (d) Burmalepisma Mendes and Poinar, 2008 (gender: feminine), type species Burmalepisma cretacicum Mendes & Poinar, 2008 by original designation;
- (e) Cretalepisma Mendes & Wunderlich, 2013 (gender: feminine), type species Cretalepisma kachinicum Mendes & Wunderlich, 2013 by original designation;
- (f) *Ctenolepisma* Escherich, 1905 (gender: feminine), type species *Lepisma line-ata* Fabricius, 1775 by subsequent designation of Paclt, 1967 (p. 38) on the grounds of priority;
- (g) Gopsilepisma Irish, 1989 (gender: feminine), type species Gopsilepisma veracunda Irish, 1989 by original designation;
- (h) Hemilepisma Paclt, 1967 (gender: feminine), type species Braunsiella heymonsi Escherich, 1905 by original designation;
- (i) Heterolepisma Escherich, 1905 (gender: feminine), type species Lepisma pampeana Silvestri, 1902 by subsequent designation of Paclt, 1967;
- (j) Hyperlepisma Silvestri, 1932 (gender: feminine), type species Hyperlepisma patrizii Silvestri, 1932 by original designation;
- (k) Leucolepisma Wall, 1954 (gender: feminine), type species Leucolepisma arenaria Wall, 1954 by original designation;
- (1) Mirolepisma Silvestri, 1938 (gender: feminine), type species Mirolepisma deserticola Silvestri, 1938 by original designation;
- (m) Nebkhalepisma Irish, 1988 (gender: feminine), type species Hyperlepisma australis Wygodzinsky, 1960 by original designation;
- (n) Neoasterolepisma Mendes, 1988a (gender: feminine), type species Lepisma foreli Moniez, 1894 by original designation;
- (o) Ornatilepisma Irish, 1988 (gender: feminine), type species Ornatilepisma horni Irish, 1988 by original designation;
- (p) Panlepisma Silvestri, 1940 (gender: feminine), type species Panelpisma argentina Silvestri, 1940 by original designation;
- (q) Protolepisma Mendes & Poinar, 2013 (gender: feminine) type species P. tainicum Mendes & Poinar, 2013 by original designation;
- (r) *Psammolepisma* Irish, 1988 (gender: feminine), type species *Ctenolepisma* schultzei Silvestri, 1908f by original designation;
- (s) *Sabulepisma* Irish, 1988 in Irish & Mendes, 1988 (gender: feminine), type species *Sabulepisma multiformis* Irish, 1988 in Irish & Mendes, 1988 by original designation;

- (t) Sceletolepisma Wygodzinsky, 1955 (gender: feminine), type species Ctenolepisma (Sceletolepisma) arenicola Wygodzinsky, 1955 by original designation;
- (u) Swalepisma Irish, 1988 in Irish & Mendes, 1988 (gender: feminine), type species Swalepisma mirabilis Irish, 1988 in Irish & Mendes, 1988 by original designation;
- (v) Tricholepisma Paclt, 1967 (gender: feminine), type species Lepisma aurea Dufour, 1831 by original designation;
- (w) Xenolepisma Mendes, 1981 (gender: feminine), type species Lepisma globosa Escherich, 1905 by original designation.
- (4) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *longicaudata* Escherich, 1905, as published in the binomen *Ctenolepisma longicaudata*.

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Comments on this case are invited for publication (subject to editing) in the *Bulletin*; they should be sent to I.C.Z.N., Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, U.K. (e-mail: iczn@nhm.ac.uk).

